

## **Stages of Grief: Defined by Elizabeth Kubler – Ross**

It is important to understand the various stages of grief. Everyone does not necessarily go through every stage, nor do they go through them in any order. Each person has their own timetable and their own style of grief. A person may struggle with several stages at the same time. The depth and duration of each stage is different for everyone. You may experience a feeling briefly, intermittently, or struggle with it for a very long time. Understanding the various stages may help you to cope. Know that others have gone through this pain and have eventually been able to reinvest in life gives many people a sense of hope.

### **Five Stages of Grief**

#### **Denial:**

At first, we tend to deny the loss. We may withdraw from our usual social contacts. The grieving person may tell themselves that it isn't happening. They may believe that the loved one will come back to them. At first, it is difficult to accept a death as final. We may refuse to use the terms, "died" or "dead" and instead say that they have passed on. In general, the mind refuses to accept what is happening. This stage may last a few moments, or much longer.

#### **Anger:** Anger comes as you begin to accept reality.

The grieving person may then be furious at the person who inflicted the hurt (even if that person is dead), or at the world for letting it happen. The grieving person may be angry at themselves for letting the event take place, even if, realistically nothing could have prevented the loss. It is common to be angry at any party that we can believe impacted the death of our loved one.

#### **Bargaining:** Bargaining is trying to get them back.

At this stage, the grieving person may try to make bargains with a greater force, asking, "If I do this, will you take away my loss". This is an attempt to believe that we have power that we don't have – to avoid the reality that loss can happen regardless of our deserving it. This is an attempt to feel that we have power against the negative experiences in our life.

#### **Depression:**

The one experiencing the loss feels numb, although anger and sadness may remain underneath. We may feel alone and think we will be alone forever – or for the rest of life. This can be a dangerous stage in which people tend to give up. It is important to remember that we get past this. It is important for the person in grief to know that this is a typical stage and that they will pass through it.

#### **Acceptance:**

This is when the anger, sadness, and mourning have tapered off. The person, at this stage, accepts the reality of the loss. They accept that death is an inevitable part of life. The grieving person may know that they will always love and miss the other, but they realize that they are alive and they have life to live for themselves.

"The depth of the feeling continued to surprise and threaten me, but each time it hit again and I bore it...I would discover that it hadn't washed me away."

— Anne Lamott, *Traveling Mercies: Some Thoughts on Faith*